

Sermons on John 17 ~ By Samuel Pierce ~ Sermon 13,

Joh 17:15

**I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world,
but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.**

In the continuation of our Lord's prayer for his apostles, every petition opens his heart afresh. It shows how dearly he loved them, how most affectionately he felt for them, how fully he knew them, how deeply intent he was on all their cases and circumstances. This prayer which is most truly inimitable, contains, and is contained in fourteen verses. Every particular in it is of more worth than all words can express, or all minds conceive. Every thing is in it. There is nothing left out of it. Our Lord himself could not express more. His apostles could never in any case or circumstance need more. It shows the vast comprehension of Christ's mind. It proves how the whole of his concern for his beloved ones, consisted in their receiving from the Father every blessing of everlasting love. In it is set forth the love of God towards them, the acts of the divine mind of all the divine Persons respecting them, the knowledge these apostles had of the mission of Christ, of his mediatorship, of his having received all from the Father. They are admitted to hear Christ pray for them upon the footing of their being the elect of God, and given by the Father to him. They are permitted to hear Christ speaking to the Father for them, upon the foundation of the eternal settlements of grace, and covenant transactions. He says to his Father, and all thine are mine, and mine are thine, and I am glorified in them. Then he commits them to his Father. As he had received them as a gift from him, so he gives them up again to him, entreating he would take the charge of them, and keep them through his own name, in the ways of holiness, and so work in them all the good pleasure of his will, that they might persevere in his faith and fear, until they were brought to his everlasting kingdom. One argument to enforce all this, was,

that he was going to leave them, and they were in the world. As he was soon to leave them, he speaks what he now did, that when he was in glory, his words might comfort their hearts, and that hereby they might have his joy fulfilled in themselves. He expresses his faithfulness towards them, and his Father also. He had received the whole gospel, containing the whole revelation of the love, will, council, and covenant of the Eternal Three, from his Father, and he had delivered the same unto them. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. In which our Jesus most certainly speaks to his Father in a way which could not but commend them to him. Their being hated by the world, was on Christ's account. They were hated because of their cleaving with full purpose of heart unto him. They were hated because they were chosen out of the world. It was because they were the called of God. It was because they were a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, who were in an especial manner called to show forth the praises of him who had called them out of darkness into his marvelous light, that the world hated them. It was because they were like Christ. I have given them thy word: and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. He then prays to the Father agreeable to this, saying, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. In which words we have these following particulars.

First, What Christ does not pray for, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world.

Secondly, What Christ prays for, I pray that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. As I go over these two general heads, I will by way of sections observe, first, why our Lord did not pray for their departure out of the world. And endeavor, secondly, to show how necessary it is for us to be reconciled to living in the world, so long as the Lord is pleased to continue us in it. And thirdly, the Lord's end and design in continuing his people, after calling, in it. This

will come under the first general head. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world.

Then under the second general head, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil: under which second general head, I will aim to point out the evil intended. Then in section first, aim to show the personal and peculiar evils the Lord's called people are the subjects of. Section second, that it is whilst they are in this world, they are exposed to them. And section third, what relief is contained in this petition of our Lord's, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Thus I have given you an account of the subjects which are to be set before you, and treated of in this present sermon.

My first particular is, what Christ doth not pray for. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world.

Our Lord does not pray for his apostles to be taken out of the world. This is what he does not pray for on their behalf. Yet one would have thought, as he had been just expressing their case and circumstances in the world, how they were hated by the world, and he also being going himself from them, it would have been a great blessing for him to have prayed at least for their speedy removal from this present time-state, that they being absent from the body might be present with the Lord. Yet our Lord, who is wisdom itself, and goodness itself, in the very essence and perfection thereof, knew it would be best for his apostles to remain here below, notwithstanding all they would be exercised with. Now it is very desirable to us, who have acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ, to think nothing would be so advantageous to us, as to be removed out of the world by death, and be admitted to glory. Many a year past, these words of our Lord put a stop to this in my mind. For most assuredly our Jesus knows what is best for all his people. And as he here says for his beloved apostles, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, it follows, it must include is will for other saints, as well as for these most eminent ones. But I will in three sections aim to unfold this my first general head. And,

First, observe why our Lord did not pray for their departure out of the world. They were to be left in the world to preach the everlasting gospel. To raise up (as instruments) the New Testament church, to deliver the ordinances of Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as they had received them from their Lord and Savior. They were to give the full account of all the form, matter, order, officers, and laws of Christ's house; therefore they were to be continued in the world. This is one reason why Jesus says to his divine Father, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world. They were to preach the gospel to every creature, i.e. to Gentiles as well as Jews. They were to preach it throughout the whole world, i.e. at least throughout the whole Roman empire. They were to bear their personal and particular testimony for Christ, and to suffer for the truth. They were to glorify the Lord in their lives, and by their deaths. All (John excepted) were to seal the truths they preached with their own blood. Therefore the Lord did not pray for their departure out of the world. It would be better for them, better for the church of Christ on earth, for them to be continued in the world, than to be removed from it to heaven. Notwithstanding the rage of hell; the malice and subtly of the devil against them; the inveterate hatred of the world; the tremendous storms of persecutions; though their lives were in jeopardy every hour; yet hereby the Lord's cause and interest was promoted; which it could not be, by their having been taken to heaven. It may be clear to us from hence the propriety of our Lord's saying, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world. As it was spoke in their hearing, they hereby knew their Lord's will and pleasure, concerning their continuation in the world. They knew they were continued on the earth for this one end, to give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. They did not live to themselves, nor for themselves. They lived that Christ might so live in them, and so put forth his power in them, as that his gospel might be realized in their minds, tempers, walk, lives, conversations, sufferings and death, as that hereby the full fruits and effects of our Lord's salvation might be most divinely

evidenced. It was for Christ's honor they should live in the world, that they should suffer in the world, that they should have no certain dwelling-place. That they should plainly prove they had their conversation in heaven. We learn from hence Christ can be more glorified in continuing some of his saints on earth, than by his taking them sooner to heaven. It was so with respect to these his apostles. It is so by some of his ministers. It is for Christ's glory, and for his church's good, that they are kept out of heaven; are on earth in a militant state. Let them therefore remember they are not their own. They are the Lord's. They are kept in the church for the Lord's glory. Let them therefore aim to promote it as their one grand business both in life and death.

As our Lord did not pray for the departure of his apostles out of the world, so neither does he for his people's. We who are saints indeed, are often praying to be delivered out of this present state, and taken to glory. But we are not then looking at these words of Christ. We are not then submitting to the wisdom of Christ. We are not then of the same mind and will with Christ. No, indeed; then we are not. But flesh is flesh, and sense is sense, and carnal reason is carnal reason even in saints, and we are the subjects of it. All of us who are born again, feel sin, have our inward sight, sense, and perceptions of it. We all groan under the ruins of a spoiled nature. When we have our peculiar exercises with it, and experiences from it, we then think nothing would be so expressive of God's love to us, as a speedy translation to heaven. We all think so at times. Yet our Lord thinks otherwise. I will therefore endeavor in this second section, to show how necessary it is for us to be reconciled to live in the world, all the Lord's time. That is, so long as he is pleased to continue us in it.

It is an everlasting truth, heaven is the habitation of all saints. They are prepared for it in regeneration, and it is prepared for them, in the everlasting purpose of God. When they are created anew in Christ Jesus, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, then they are made meet for the heavenly inheritance. Nor will they ever be more meet. They have a title to heaven, in their

adoption. They have a meetness for heaven in their regeneration. Their title is without them. Their meetness is within them. It consists in being made partaker's of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in them. He hath produced in their souls a spiritual faculty, a supernatural birth, whereby they are capacitated to know and enjoy Christ, and the Father in him. And they having been thus formed by the Holy Ghost for the Lord's praise, have communion with the Father, and the Son. Now such persons have at times some sweet foretastes of eternal glory. Therefore, they long to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Yet though this is a part of their present happiness, yet there are a variety of seasons, sorrows, temptations, and cases which befall them, which cause them, at least some of them, not only to long for death, that they may be discharged from the present state, but even to think it hard of Christ to continue them so long in the world. Yet Christ's time not being come, it is very, very becoming then to submit to his will, to be reconciled to living in the world all the Lord's time. Because what the Lord says here, without all doubt, belongs to the whole household and family of faith, as well as to the apostles. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world. And there are very important reasons, ends, and designs Christ hath, in continuing his called people in the world. Such as are beneficial to themselves, and others. And such as will increase his praise and glory. We shall not glorify Christ in heaven. It is only on earth we can glorify him. We are here in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. We are here to be made conformable to Jesus Christ. We are here to be the subjects of sins and miseries. We are here to be hated by the world. We are here to experience death, and by all thee we are fitted for Christ's glory. Yea, by all these we are fitted for Jesus to display his glorious grace on. We being exactly such objects and subjects, as he can gain to himself, by all he does in us, and by us, a glorious name of praise. Whilst saints are in the world, they are sorely grieved with the experience they have of a body of sin. Oh, They long for death to come and put an everlasting stop to all their feelings of it. Oh, Think they, to be in heaven with Christ,

how desirable: so it is. Yet were we to be taken now, the church on earth would sustain a loss. Other believers are in the same case with us. They are to be profited by us. We are to be examples to them, in resting on Jesus truly. In going actually to him with all our cases. In living on him, so as to live down our own personal guilt and corruptions. Our lives, our faith, our conversation, is to be beneficial to them. This should reconcile our minds to the Lord's will. This should make us contented to be on earth as long as the Lord pleases. And it would be well were we to attend closely to what the apostle says to the saints at Rome, for none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. Ro 14: 7-9. We as saints, want while we are in the world, to improve by everything we feel in it. We want to profit by everything which befalls us in it. We want to feel real good by all which concerns us in it. And so to live as having Christ for our example, as to be hereby bringing glory to Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This would make us perfectly dead unto it, whilst we are living in it. This would be a blessed preparing ourselves to bid an everlasting farewell to it. Yea, this would reconcile our minds to leave it any given moment when the Lord shall be pleased to call for us. And this would make us perfectly contented to live all our Lord's time which he hath appointed for us. Believers in Jesus, it is necessary for us, to be reconciled to live in the world, all the Lord's time. That is, so long as he is pleased to continue us in it. Some saints are exercised with sore temptations. It is necessary for them to know, the Lord hath an end to be answered hereby. It is necessary for them to be resigned to the Lord's will. His glory and praise will be increased hereby. Some saints are continually exposed to the fiery darts of the devil. It is good for them to know, it is not without Christ. He it is who permits it. He will promote their real good, and his own glory by it. Some saints are afflicted with grievous pains, sore diseases, long sickness. It is not without

Christ. We are apt to think it would be an act of great love in Jesus to remove them. It would not. If it would, he most certainly loves them too well to continue them one moment longer in this world, than will be for their benefit, and his praise. Some saints lose all their friends, worldly goods, are in a state of poverty. Yet they are continued in the world, and that in many, several years. All this is the will of Christ concerning them. Some real saints outlive the exercised of their faculties, yet the Lord is pleased to continue them in the world. To all these saints of the Most High, to each and every one of their sorrows, grief's, conditions, cases, circumstances and miseries, we may apply these words of our Lord, and be still, and know that he is God. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world. And we that are Christ's, should so far honor Christ, as to fear none of these evils. But so leave ourselves with him, as to be careless concerning what may befall us in this present time-state. Because he will never withdraw his eye from us. His ear will be always open unto us. We shall be in no case, but he will be mindful of us, and will bless us. And every thing which befalls us, shall redound to our good, the benefit of others, and the praise of his glory. I will therefore, in my third section, show the Lord's end and design, in continuing his people in the world, after he hath effectually called them to the knowledge of himself, and into communion with himself. It must be to answer such ends as are worthy of his great name.

The Lord does not continue his people in the world, after they are called out of it, and separated from others by grace, but to answer some vast design. It must be one end why they are continued in the world, that they may daily see and know what they are saved from. It must be our Lord's design in continuing them in the world, and giving them to see and feel more and more of their inward guilt and depravity, to make way for them to value him their Redeemer, and his great and plenteous redemption. As he will have a church in the world, until his second coming, so he will continue his people, after they are called with an holy calling, that they may be perpetual objects of his mercy and compassion, in the world. Saints

of all sorts of corruptions; of all sorts of graces; of all sorts of temptations; of all sorts of sorrows; of all sorts of bodily disease; of all maladies; of all sorts of miseries; of every sort and kind of bodily infirmity. And Christ will have it so, that they shall be continued in the world; that he may express his grace and royal mercy towards them in his own way, and hereby gain an everlasting name. It is not for us to prescribe to him what he shall do. He gains glory where we see it not. He does good though we perceive it not. He gets praise and glory out of all his saved and called ones, where we have not the least idea of it. It is his glory to conceal even from the eye of faith, some of the glorious acts of his grace. We honor him most by a passive reception of his truth, by a perfect acquiescence to his will, and by being well pleased with all the good pleasure of his will. When Christ says, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, he holds forth a doctrine to us, calculated to lead us to dismiss all our cares, and be well pleased to continue in the world so long as our Lord is pleased to continue us here. We live that he may display his grace and power in us, that he may make known his salvation by us, that his name may be had in honor, and his faithfulness be so displayed, that generations which shall succeed, may celebrate his praise, and make his name glorious. These then are the ends which are to be answered by the continuance of the Lord's called people in this world, after calling, and under a variety of sorrows and afflictions, that the love of Christ may be displayed; the mercy of Christ expressed; the power of Christ be put forth; the promise of Christ be fulfilled; and the salvation of Christ realized so as to suit all his beloved ones, in every case and circumstance which can possibly befall any of them, all of them, and each individual of them this side heaven. The subject I have attempted is great. The subject is wonderful. As I have handled it, you must allow it very suitable and relieving. It is experimental and practical. And I conceive you will say it is suitable to unfold our Lord's words before us. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world. As I have in three sections endeavored to show, first, he did not pray for the

departure of his apostles, ministers, and people out of the world. Secondly, have showed how necessary it is for us to be reconciled to living in the world, so long as the Lord is pleased to continue us in it. Thirdly, shown the Lord's end and design, in continuing his people, after calling, in it. I proceed to my second general head of discourse, concerning what Christ prays for. I pray that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

Under which I will aim to point out the evil intended. Then in three distinct sections I will aim to set forth, first, the personal and peculiar evils the Lord's called people are the subjects of. Section second, that it is whilst they are in this world, they are the subjects of them. Thirdly, what relief is contained in this petition of our Lord's; I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. My second general head with which I am now to begin, is what Christ here prays for; I pray that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

The word evil here to which the article is added the evil is doubtless very comprehensive. It includes and comprehends the evil of sin, the evil one, Satan, and the evils comprehended in the hatred of the world against the apostles of Christ. Our Lord had prayed for their being kept in the ways of holiness, for their being kept in the truths and ordinances of the everlasting gospel. He had prayed for their perseverance in the good ways of the Lord, and now he prays they may be kept from the evil. He must mean from the evil which is in the world. From the evil one, i.e. the devil, who is as a roaring lion, who walketh up and down seeking whom he may devour, from the evil contained in their fallen natures, and from the evil contained in those severe persecution they were to endure from the rage and malice of men. He does not pray they may be delivered from them, so as that they should not be exercised with them, but saved from them, so as to receive no real injury in their souls through them. And as this petition in the first place belongs in a very singular way and manner to the elect apostles, so it was most remarkably fulfilled in them. So that I conceive it had in them its most effectual accomplishment. The

God and Father of our Lord Jesus keep's them in a most singular and eminent way and manner, from the evil of sin. So that their inward sin was kept down and most marvelously subdued. They were kept from the evil one, Satan, so as to be more than conquerors over him in all his spiritual assaults against them. They were so kept amidst all the rage of persecution, that they held fast, and abode steadfastly in the truths of the everlasting gospel. They overcame Satan, and the rage and storms of tremendous persecutions, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death. All evil is contained in sin. The essence of all sin is in the devil. He is in the world. He worketh with energy in the children of disobedience. He is in every persecution raised against Christ, his apostles, his ministers, his church, his people. He is at the foundation, the root, the spring, and cause of every error, and heresy. Here Christ prays against him. Here the Lion of the tribe of Judah prevails. Here he says to his Father, on behalf of his apostles present, I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil, from the evil of their own corrupt natures, so that it may not have the dominion over them. From the evil one, Satan so that he may be confounded in all his machinations against them, from the evil men of the world who will seek their destruction, and from every evil they may be exposed unto. And agreeable to all this, the evangelist Mark records, our Lord gave these very individual persons the following command after his resurrection, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils, they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. Having in this second general head, pointed out the evil which Christ pray his apostles may be kept from, I proceed to the sections of this third head of my discourse, and will begin with the first. In which I am to set forth the personal and peculiar evils the

Lord's called people are the subjects of. It will very easily occur to your minds, that sin is the source of them. The only one in certain sense, because it is the root and spring of all others. It is the called people of God, and those who are most immediately under the divine light and teaching of the Holy Spirit, who see, know, and feel most of their own sinfulness. They are saved from the whole of it by imputation. The Lord having laid it on Christ, he having borne it in his own body on the tree, hereby they are in God's sight perfectly saved from it. They are hereby completely justified and acquitted. The effects of it remain in them. Their whole life and being of it remain in their fallen nature. Yet none of it is imputed. Therefore, it is written, Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Blessed is the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works. The Lord's called people have their personal sin. It may be called their besetting sin, because they are always in danger from it, and very liable to fall by it. These words of our Lord's therefore are suited to them. He here prays for their being preserved from evil. I pray that thou wouldest keep them from the evil. The prayer is for preservation from sin, from personal sin. Yet it must be allowed that the prayer and intercession of Christ does not keep the called elect from falling into partial acts of sin. A proof of it we have in all the persons here prayed for. Peter fell, and fell souly too, after this prayer was offered up for him. So did the other ten apostles. They all forsook him and fled. But this prayer brought them back again. It was answered in their spiritual recovery. But if the intercession of Christ does not wholly, and altogether save the Lord's called people from falling transiently into sin, and if we say it does, we must deny scripture, and experience both; it may be asked, what does the intercession of Christ do for us? I reply, it brings us back again. It preserves us from so falling, as not to fall into the sin against the Holy Ghost. It preserves us from falling under the dominion of sin. The word of the Lord cannot fall to the ground. Sin shall not have dominion over you. My grace is sufficient for thee. These are immutable truths. God will fulfill them to all his

people. A great part of our real happiness is contained in a right knowledge of them. It is peculiarly and personally the case of some of the Lord's beloved, to be plagued with some constitutional evil. To such it is truly relieving that Christ hath prayed his Father to preserve them from evil. There is the evil of sin. There is the evil which is in evil men, and which they express variously against the children of the most high God. And there is the evil one, Satan, who is implacable in his malice and hatred against the saints of the Lord, and these the Lord's called people, are all, and each of them, personally, and particularly exercised with. And in our Lord's prayer, they may through the grace of the Holy Spirit, most assuredly find relief. Yea, here is present and immediate relief. Therefore, let your personal evils be what they may, come with them to the throne of grace. Look to the heart of Christ in heaven. It is here opened to your view. I pray, says Christ, that thou wouldest keep them from the evil. Oh, how full of Christ's grace is this petition! Beloved, Jesus looks upon us. He looks within us. He fully knows us, and everything concerning us, and everything which concerns us. He knows all the evil within us. He knows how it affects us. He knows what we feel inwardly. He is well acquainted with our temporal as well as our spiritual concerns. He knows what our wants and sorrows are. He says, I pray that thou wouldest keep them from the evil. It would be good for us to be acquainted with all the evil we are the subjects of, and go to God in Christ with these words: Lord, I am so and so; I feel so and so; sin is too strong for me; the devil withstands me; the world frowns on me; persecutors rage they are ready to swallow me up. Holy Father, Jesus hath prayed for me; he put up this petition on my behalf; keep them from the evil; keep me for his sake, Holy Father, from this evil, and thou shalt have the everlasting glory thereof. My beloved, it is in such a way of access to God, we obtain the very blessing our Lord hath prayed for. The Lord himself teach you to come to him in this simple believing manner. You will always find benefit when you thus approach your heavenly Father, in the name of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, the Saviour,

Intercessor, and Advocate of his church and people. He is suited to all the personal and peculiar evil his called people are the subjects of either in mind, body, or estate.

I proceed to my second section in which I am to show how it is only while the Lord's people are in this world, they are the subjects of those evils and miseries. All their evils end here below. So soon as they are delivered from the body by death, all and every evil expires. No more sin will then be in them forever. They will be as truly delivered from the very in-beings of it, as Christ himself is free from it. No more miseries of any sort or kind. The evil one, Satan, can no more assault them. They are everlastingly out of his reach. No more persecution from evil men. No more infirmities of body or mind. The former things are done away. As this present state will soon be at an end, and the Lord's prayer here before us belongs to his beloved ones, it concerns them, and belongs unto them in a very special manner whilst they are in this present evil world; so from these words, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil, they may derive strong consolation. It is well with us when it is given unto us, to suit our petitions at the throne of grace, suited exactly to our own personal and particular cases. It is not always that we can. Yet our Lord's prayer comprehends all our cases, and suit our every particular case, sin, misery. Believers consider this. You will find great ease for your minds, and relief to your spirits, from right apprehensions hereof. It matters not what your case is in this world, Christ's prayer suits it, his petition reaches it. Every one of us have a propensity in our minds to seek a change of state. Any but this I am in. This is our ignorance. It only proves how very little we know of Christ, how very little we love Christ. It is good for us to abide and be well pleased to continue in that which the Lord by his holy providence hath placed us in. We are on our march for heaven. We shall not live one single moment longer in this world than is good for us. Only we must live by faith. We must not say, nor think, we live needlessly. It would be better for us to be removed. No, it would not. The Lord's will is still to continue

us here. Therefore, it is an impeaching his wisdom and goodness, for us to think and speak otherwise. As it is only now, whilst we are in the body, and in the world, we are the subjects of sin, corruption, sorrow and misery, and have our Lord's mind concerning it, that he does not pray, he does not intercede for his Father to remove us, let us be still, and seek a real conformity to Christ in all that we suffer. As his continuing is here, is to answer some glorious end, which cannot but redound to his glory, let us fall down before his Majesty and say, Good is the will of the Lord concerning us. As we are in the school of Christ, and are to be continued in this world that he may display his grace and mercy towards us, and upon us, let us rejoice herein. We are to remain here for a season, that our Lord may be glorified in us, and by us. We look too much to some outward display of our Lord's towards us, wherein, and whereby we think he may be glorified. But he gets himself glory in us, and from us, where we least expect, and when we least perceive it. He does it inwardly, and to us often very imperceptibly. By giving us to honor his godhead, to admire his wisdom, to submit to his holy will and pleasure, by such still and silent conceptions wrought in the mind by the Holy Ghost, as leads to a glorifying and magnifying Christ, in his dealing and dispensations with us. It is hereby our Lord carries on his work within us, gives us strength according to our day. It is hereby he assuages our griefs. In this way he often removes our guilt. Hereby he dwells in our hearts, and by possessing our spiritual faculties with the knowledge and enjoyment of himself, gives us to enjoy a real sense of his promised heaven. He brings it down into our hearts, and gives us a blessed participation of it. Now as it is only whilst we, the children of God, his beloved ones, in whom is all his delight, are the subjects of sin, disease, grief's, and death, and the Lord's grace towards us is so great, that he can and doth gain glory to himself, by magnifying his power, and displaying his mercy, and continuing his loving-kindness to us. And what befalls us in this world, is all intended to make way for us to be the more sensibly affected with his love; hence we may well praise him for

continuing is in the world, and be well contented to abide in it, and be exercised with all he pleases. Because all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. It is most truly great what the Lord himself says, Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul. Were we to live in the Lord, in the exercise of faith, on the simplicity of his most holy word, we should be truly happy, let our case and circumstances in the world be what they might. Such is the provision the Lord God hath made for us, that there is no one thing can befall us in this world, but we have a word in the Bible suited to it, nor on single case, but there is a suitable promise made to us in it. Our whole life here should be a life of faith. And were it so, we should then be as happy as we could be, out of heaven. As believers in Jesus, it should be our study to live this life on earth, because we cannot live this life in heaven. O that our eye may be fixed on this petition of our Lord's to his Father on our behalf, I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.

And thus I am brought to my third section, to show the Lord's end and design, in continuing his people after they are called with an holy calling in the world.

It is that they may have an experimental and practical, a personal and particular knowledge of the sins and sorrow, the temptations and miseries, the enemies and evils, which he hath, doth, and will for ever save us from. We are admitted to remain here for a season, that we may have such intercourse and communion with Jesus, as we can never have in heaven. We are permitted to have such a sight, such a sense, such a feeling of what we are in ourselves, that we may be fitted for real converse with Jesus. We converse with him best, when we enjoy him least; it is when our feelings are all distressing's, our knowledge of our personal sinfulness, such as causes us to abominate ourselves, that we are best prepared for conversing with Christ, and for him to converse with us. Now it is only in this world we can have communion with Christ thus. And hereby the Holy Ghost is pleased to give us such ideas of Christ's

mercy, as fills us with inexpressible admiration. Now as this leads us to give him glory, so this is his end for continuing us in the world. He could, if he pleased, take all his called people to heaven immediately. But how then would his glory be seen? It could not be so displayed thereby, as it is in continuing his people in the world, in saving them from the evil in it, in maintaining his own work in their minds, in displaying his power in their souls, in making sometimes, and in some certain instances, the weakest in his flock, a terror to the devil, a wonder to the world. And thus holding up to public view how faithful he is in the accomplishment of his promise, which runs thus, He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. As our Lord did in the primitive ages of his church, uphold saints, so as that they suffered most cheerfully in the defense of his gospel, so our Lord is now pleased, in many cases, to sustain some of his children, under very severe conflicts with sin, self, the devil, and the world. Others, our Lord most marvelously bears up under sore diseases, bodily weakness, excruciating pains, even to the astonishment of such as are witnesses of the extremity of such and such cases. His end in all, is his own glory, and the real good of his beloved ones. He is pleased marvelously to sustain, and bear up the minds of some of his beloved in the article of death, hereby proving that he hath conquered death. And our Lord can only act and display his grace thus towards his beloved, whilst they are here below. He is all-sufficient for his people. He is almighty to defend them. he is their God, their Saviour, their Friend, their All. As one said, I should not be afraid if I were to be dragged through hell, after I were out of the body, if so be Christ were with me. So say I. What matter is it to me, to you, what sort of evil the Lord is pleased to exercise us with, if the Lord is with us, and will sanctify it to us, and cause it to work together for our good, and his own glory? O let us go on looking to Jesus. Let us consider the provision he has made for us, all the while we are to continue in a time-state. Let us be looking over the negative, and also the positive part of this his petition, which our divine Lord put up to his Father for his

apostles, for his churches, for his ministers, for his people collectively and individually. “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” The more we attend unto it, the more support we shall receive from it, the more we understand it, the more we shall admire and bless our Lord Jesus Christ for the same. And now, my beloved, I can say no more on this subject. Not that it is exhausted, no, in my own views it is scarcely entered on, but owing to the poverty of my own mind, and the want of a more enlarged comprehension. May the Holy Spirit grant you his own light and divine unction which searcheth all things. May he so set forth this petition of our Lord’s on your behalf, as suited to you, that you may get fresh encouragement therefrom to laud and magnify his most holy name. The Lord be with you all. May he lead you to a continual exercise of your minds on Christ Jesus. Even so be it, O Lord. Amen, and Amen.